

## **RESPONSE TO SEASONAL WORKER CLAIMS**

### **On behalf of Jim Chu, Sr. Vice President, Aquilini Group:**

“We are aware that allegations were made today by a group of temporary foreign workers. This is the first we have heard of many of these claims, and we intend to investigate them fully. Having said that, many of the allegations are extreme, unfounded and false; the claim that water was withheld is particularly egregious.

Every year, Golden Eagle employs hundreds of workers to fill seasonal positions. No Canadians apply for these positions, which is why Golden Eagle engages workers under the Temporary Foreign Workers Program.

Foreign workers live in housing that is inspected annually. These inspections are conducted by a home inspector approved by the BC Agriculture Council. On Jan. 12, 2018, a Schedule F housing inspection was conducted, and the housing was determined to be in compliance with all government requirements.

Golden Eagle has employed thousands of foreign workers from various countries over the years. Many return year after year, and many have thanked Golden Eagle for providing employment that helps sustain family members back home.

Some foreign workers have sought permanent legal residency in Canada. Many who have obtained residency continue to work for Golden Eagle.

Golden Eagle first employed Guatemalan workers in 2017. When more Guatemalan workers were brought back in 2018, many of them fled immediately after arriving. Some made their way into the United States.

The initial complaints about wages were lodged only after Guatemalan workers were told they had to return home. In a mediation process, an advocate told Golden Eagle that the complaints would be dropped if Golden Eagle paid the advocate \$100,000 and the group of women \$225,000. Golden Eagle considered this extortive and refused to pay.

In response to news of this situation reaching workers now back in Guatemala, Golden Eagle received an unsolicited letter of appreciation and support signed by many seasonal agricultural workers who have worked at Golden Eagle under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and followed the terms of their work permits and returned home (their letter is attached).

Golden Eagle is committed to providing a safe and equitable workplace for all its employees. We now intend to focus again on our farm operations so we can continue to provide jobs and income for the Canadian and foreign workers who choose to work for us to support themselves and their families.”